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## Vernacular Grounds: A Process of Observation

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# BEGINNING OF

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE BEGINNING DESIGN STUDENT

**NCBDS 27** april 1-2, 2011  
university of nebraska - lincoln

# IN THE END

### Conference Chairs:

Peter Hind  
Lindsey Bahe  
Brian Kelly

### Keynote Speakers:

Allison Arieff, Columnist  
New York Times

Michael James, Chair  
Dept. of Textiles, Clothing and Design  
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

### Session Topic Chairs:

#### PROVEN THROUGH THE DECADES

Tim McGinty

#### INTEGRATING INTEGRATION

Matt Burgermaster  
New Jersey Institute of Technology

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Iowa State University

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#### DESIGN DEMO CRAZY: CUSTOMIZATION INDIVIDUALIZATION, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Susanne Frasier & Sanjit Roy  
Morgan State, University

#### GROUNDLESS

Greg Watson and Hans Herrmann  
Mississippi State University

### Paper Abstract Reviewers and additional Moderators:

Among many others we would like to thank the following: Chris Ford, Betsy Gabb, Steven Ginn, Tim Hemsath, Sarah Thomas,

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**Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, College of Architecture administration for encouraging us to pursue this conference in order to both share our work and to ask the types of questions that needed to be asked at the beginning design level. The support from the administration has been endless.

Along with the administration we would also like to thank the faculty at the College of Architecture. Along with a busy semester, a large number of them found time to offer support and assistance with the conference. Special thanks to Chris Ford for his willingness to curate and manage the show of student work on display throughout the building. Additionally, without Tim Hemsath's early involvement, the conference would have looked and felt much differently.

Our goal was to have non-architects as speakers and we were pleasantly surprised to get two of the best. We are immensely grateful for their participation and willingness to share observations and critique on beginning design. Thank you Allison Arieff and Michael James for joining our discussion and for being brave enough to enter a room filled with architectural educators.

The body of the conference was comprised of a diverse list of session topics, all of which were submitted as a response to the conference theme. The Topic Chairs then reviewed abstracts, papers, and spent time choreographing the actual conference sessions. These individuals have been crafting much of the important content for the conference. We thank all of them for their patience and for going well above the expected workload. They are all volunteers and they have done their work with grace and care, thank you!

To diversify the blind peer-review process further, we had a selection of peer reviewers who worked through the submitted abstracts. We are grateful for their commitment as well.

We would like to thank adjunct professor, Nick Rebeck for the design of the amazing billboard bags (and sewing help). Thanks also to the volunteer students who sewed diligently. Graduate students Abbie Reece, Brittany McClure and Maura Trumble must be mentioned by name for their hard work on the Proceedings, graphics, and general preparations for the conference.

A big thank you also goes to all of the paper and poster presenters whose work made the conference possible.

Finally, thank you to the past chairs of the NCBDS. We submitted a proposal to host the conference and you selected us – we hope we lived up to your expectations and we look forward to a continued relationship with this important group of educators. We wish Jodi LaCoe and her conference committee the best of luck for next year's 2012 NCBDS conference to be held at Pennsylvania State University.

Peter Hind, Lindsey Bahe, and Brian Kelly

**The Conference Theme:**

Design schools have been dealing with issues of sustainability, design, and solutions to problems for a long time. It has been long known that meaningful design inherently calls for sustainable outcomes and leads to solutions in harmony with nature; not outside of it. While this may be true, the level of discourse about the impact *our* design can have in improving the climate, material reduction, energy reduction, and more, has increased to astonishing levels.

Almost ten years ago, William McDonough and Michael Braungart in *Cradle to Cradle* suggested a radical method of thinking and making (perhaps this is not actually radical, just counter to the entrenched methods of making in the developed world). This call for change has been with us for some time but is our teaching paving the way for *their* type of new thinking? Are we really capable of this level of change? Can we affect change in what we do? If sustainable design thinking is the solution to environmental issues, do our early design studios prepare the way for change?

The NCBDS 27 conference raised these and other questions about the shifts in practice and teaching. How are we responding or speculating about them? We created and encouraged participants in the conference to both answer and challenge our questions. Our goal was to create a stage where educators can claim what they are doing in foundation education is preparing students for the shifts and changes that have happened in the field of design. Conversely, discussions proposed an opposing view point that suggests that we are *not* doing enough.

We never wanted to prescribe outcomes, but rather we wanted to provide a stage for open discourse and argument.

*To eliminate the concept of waste means to design things—[buildings/spaces] products, packaging, and systems—from the very beginning on the understanding that waste does not exist.*

Cradle to Cradle pp. 104



## keynote bios:

### ***ALLISON ARIEFF***

friday, april 1 - 4:45 pm

mary riempa ross media arts center



Allison Arieff is a columnist for the New York Times' Opinionator column and is a contributing writer to GOOD. She also consults on media, design and sustainability, most recently for Urban Revision and IDEO. From 2002-2006, Arieff was Editor-in-Chief of Dwell, and was the magazine's founding senior editor. Dwell won the National Magazine Award for General Excellence in 2005 under her tenure. In 2005, she developed the Dwell Homes program, as an extension of the 2003 Dwell Home Design Invitational in which architects were invited to design a modern, affordable prefab home. Arieff is an author of the books "Prefab" and "Trailer Travel: A Visual History of Mobile America." She began her editorial career in book publishing with stints at Random House, Oxford University Press, and Chronicle Books, where she edited numerous titles on design and culture, including "Airstream: A History of the Land Yacht", "Cheap Hotels", and "Hatch Show Print: The History of a Great American Poster Shop". She has been featured as an expert on sustainable design for two seasons of the Sundance Channel series "Big Ideas for a Small Planet", as well as on CNN, NBC News, NPR, Marketplace, and KCRW's Design+Architecture; she has lectured at the Architectural League of New York, the Commonwealth Club of California, UCLA, and the Hearst Lectures at Cal Poly, among others. She received her BA in History from UCLA, her MA in Art History from UC Davis, and completed her PhD coursework in American Studies at New York University. Arieff lives in San Francisco, where she has a 500-square foot urban farm in her backyard.

### ***MICHAEL JAMES***

saturday, april 2 - 4:45 pm

sheldon museum of art



Michael James serves as the department chair and Ardis James Professor in Textiles, Clothing, & Design in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He works closely with the International Quilt Study Center & Museum, housed in his department. At UNL, Michael teaches in the areas of visual literacy, textile design, and quilt studies, and his own work in the medium of quilts has been recognized and exhibited internationally. It is included in the collections of the Museum of Arts & Design in New York City, the Racine Art Museum, the Newark Museum, the Mint Museum, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, and the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian, among others. For his work in the area of non-traditional quilts, James was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree by his undergraduate alma-mater, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, in 1992, was inducted into the Quilters Hall of Fame in 1993, became a Fellow of the American Craft Council in 2001, and in 2009 was honored with the University of Nebraska's system-wide "Outstanding Research and Creativity Activity" Award, given for a sustained record of excellent accomplishment in research or creative activity. Since 2002, he has focused his creative efforts on digital textile printing and its interface with the quilt as mixed media platform. His work explores the liminal and fluid borderland between the physical and metaphysical worlds.

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# Vernacular Grounds: A Process of Observation

Peter P. Goché, Iowa State University

This presentation will consider the role of observation in an interdisciplinary practice that seeks to comprehend the experiential nature of place and, thereby, unfold a more acute view of the world. My perspective is anthropological with specific interest in material culture, ritual and vernacular grounds. Like the anthropologist, the architect develops an understanding of the nature of lived space, not by imposing a theory, but by letting the revelation derive from the act of recording observations.<sup>1</sup> An act to which I refer as staging; the assembly of a framework used in reconstructing the nature of place. This process of inquiry is informed by the production of writing, mapping, modeling and drawing culture in effort to define the criteria for making place based propositions. This methodology is the embodiment of an interdisciplinary agenda that has to do with authenticating the architectural essence of lived space and, thereby, produces a more sustainable basis for reconstructing our inherited landscape.

This paper will consider two case studies using cartography, art, landscape architecture, and architecture as lenses for exploration. It will reflect on how students see and express their own interpretations of site, landscape and cultural inscriptions. Using processes of observation, students were asked to collaborate in the development of an iterative method to elicit new interpretations of a dormant flood plain and limestone bluff along the Missouri River at the foot of Kansas City's historic River Market area.

To generate awareness of how visual thinking evolves, students were encouraged to use multiple forms of media as tools for

visual expression. By employing various exploratory techniques, a conceptual generator based on each student's experiential comprehension of the landscape and corresponding spatial configurations was developed and informed the trajectory of each effort. The culminating staging resulted in a body of work that expresses the meaning of place and the relationship between the River Market neighborhood and the topographic and phenomenological nature of the latent site. Our coursework sought to establish individual methodologies for synthesizing the criterion with which to reconstruct a landscape and architecture that deepens the relationship between *a people* and it's local ecology. In so doing, each student came to recognize an existing socio-geographic configuration that is host to a sensation of something vast and deep and boundless – a condition that is present in the unconscious but not consciously expressed.

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<sup>1</sup> Julia W. Robinson, "Architectural Research: Incorporating Myth and Science," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (Nov., 1990), p. 24.